Remarks to the 49th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City

September 26, 1994

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished delegates. First, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the 49th General Assembly. The American people look forward to working with you to celebrate the United Nations 50th anniversary.

We meet today in a time of great hope and change. The end of the cold war, the explosion of technology and trade and enterprise have given people the world over new opportunities to live up to their dreams and their God-given potential. This is an age of hope.

Yet, in this new world, we face a contest as old as history, a struggle between freedom and tyranny, between tolerance and bigotry, between knowledge and ignorance, between openness and isolation. It is a fight between those who would build free societies governed by laws and those who would impose their will by force. Our struggle today, in a world more high-tech, more fast-moving, more chaotically diverse than ever, is the age-old fight between hope and fear.

Three times in this century, from the trenches of the Sommes to the island of Iwo Jima to the shattered wall of Berlin, the forces of hope were victorious. But the victors of World War I squandered their triumph when they turned inward, bringing on a global depression and allowing fascism to rise and reigniting global war.

After World War II, the Allies learned the lessons of the past. In the face of a new totalitarian threat and the nuclear menace, great nations did not walk away from the challenge of the moment. Instead they chose to reach out, to rebuild, and to lead. They chose to create the United Nations, and they left us a world stronger, safer, and freer.

Our generation has a difficult task. The cold war is over; we must secure the peace. It falls to us to avoid the complacency that followed World War I without the spur of the imminent threat to our security that followed World War II. We must ensure that those who fought and found the courage to end the cold war, those from both East and West who love freedom, did not labor in vain.

Our sacred mission is to build a new world for our children, more democratic, more prosperous, more free of ancient hatreds and modern means of destruction. That is no easy challenge, but we accept it with confidence. After all, the walls that once divided nations in this very chamber have come down. More nations have chosen democracy than ever before, more have chosen free markets and economic justice, more have embraced the values of tolerance and liberty and civil society that allow us all to make the most of our life.

But while the ideals of democracy and free markets are ascendant, they are surely not the whole story. Terrible examples of chaos, repression, and tyranny also mark our times. The 20th century proved that the forces of freedom and democracy can endure against great odds. Our job is to see that in the 21st century these forces triumph.

The dangers we face are less stark and more diffuse than those of the cold war, but they are still formidable: the ethnic conflicts that drive millions from their homes; the despots ready to repress their own people or conquer their neighbors; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; the terrorists wielding their deadly arms; the criminal syndicates selling those arms or drugs or infiltrating the very institutions of fragile democracy; a global economy that offers great promise but also deep insecurity and, in many places, declining opportunity; diseases like AIDS that threaten to decimate nations; the combined dangers of population explosion and economic decline which prompted the world community to reach the remarkable consensus at the Cairo conference; global and local environmental threats that demand that sustainable development becomes a part of the lives of people all around the world; and finally, within many of our nations, high rates of drug abuse and crime and family breakdown with all their terrible consequences. These are the dangers we face today.

We must address these threats to our future. Thankfully, the end of the cold war gives us a chance to address them together. In our efforts, different nations may be active in different

situations in different ways. But their purposes must be consistent with freedom and their practices consistent with international law. Each nation will bring to our common task its own particular strengths, economic, political, or military.

Of course, the first duty of every member of the United Nations is to its own citizens, to their security, their welfare, and their interests. As President of the United States, my first duty is to the citizens of my country. When our national security interests are threatened, we will act with others when we can, but alone if we must. We will use diplomacy when we can, but force if we must.

The United States recognizes that we also have a special responsibility in these common endeavors that we are taking, the responsibility that goes along with great power and also with our long history of democracy and freedom. But we seek to fulfill that responsibility in cooperation with other nations. Working together increases the impact and the legitimacy of each of our actions, and sharing the burdens lessons everyone's load. We have no desire to be the world's policemen, but we will do what we can to help civil societies emerge from the ashes of repression, to sustain fragile democracies, and to add more free markets to the world, and of course, to restrain the destructive forces that threaten us all.

In every corner of the globe, from South Africa to Asia, to Central and Eastern Europe, to the Middle East and Latin America, and now to a small island in the Caribbean, ordinary citizens are striving to build their own future. Promoting their cause is our generation's great opportunity, and we must do it together.

A coalition for democracy—it's good for America. Democracies, after all, are more likely to be stable, less likely to wage war. They strengthen civil society. They can provide people with the economic and political opportunities to build their futures in their own homes, not to flee their borders. Our efforts to help build more democracies will make us all more secure, more prosperous, and more successful as we try to make this era of terrific change our friend and not our enemy.

In my Nation, as in all of your nations, there are many people who are understandably reluctant to undertake these efforts, because often the distances are great or the cultures are different. There are good reasons for the caution that people feel. Often, the chances of success or the costs are unclear. And of course, in every common endeavor there is always the potential for failure and often the risk of loss of life. And yet our people, as we have seen in the remarkable global response to the terrible crisis in Rwanda, genuinely want to help their neighbors around the world and want to make some effort in our common cause.

We have seen that progress can be made as well. The problem is deciding when we must respond and how we shall overcome our reluctance. This will never be easy; there are no simple formulas. All of us will make these decisions, in part, based on the distance of the problem from our shores or the interests of our nation or the difference we think we can make or the cost required or the threat to our own citizens in the endeavor. Hard questions will remain and cannot be erased by some simple formula.

But we should have the confidence that these efforts can succeed, whether they are efforts to keep people alive in the face of terrible tragedy, as in Rwanda, or our efforts to avert a tragedy, as in the Horn of Africa, or our efforts to support processes that are literally changing the future of millions. History is on our side.

We should have confidence about this. Look at the march of freedom we have seen in just the last year alone. Who, a decade ago, would have dared predict the startling changes in South Africa, in the Middle East, in Ireland: the stunning triumph of democracy and majority rule; the redemption of the purpose of Nelson Mandela's life; the brave efforts of Israel and its Arab neighbors to build bridges of peace between their peoples; the earnest search by the people of Northern Ireland and Great Britain and Ireland to end centuries of divisions and decades of terror. In each case, credit belongs to those nations' leaders and their courageous people. But in each instance, the United States and other nations were privileged to help in these causes.

The growth of cooperation between the United States and the Russian Federation also should give us all great cause for confidence. This is a partnership that is rooted in democracy, a partnership that is working, a partnership of not complete agreement but genuine mutual respect.

After so many years of nuclear terror, our two nations are taking dramatic steps to ease tensions around the world. For the first time

since World War II, foreign troops do not occupy the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. The Baltic nations are free. Russian and American missiles no longer target each other's people. Three of the four nuclear members of the former Soviet Union have agreed to remove all nuclear weapons from their soil. And we are working on agreements to halt production of fissile materials for nuclear explosives, to make dismantling of nuclear warheads transparent and irreversible, and to further reduce our nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles.

The United States and Russia also recognize that we must cooperate to control the emerging danger of terrorists who traffic in nuclear materials. To secure nuclear materials at their sources, we have agreed with Russia to stop plutonium production by the year 2000, to construct a storage facility for fissile materials and buying up stocks of weapons-grade fuels, and to combat the criminals who are trying to smuggle materials for nuclear explosives.

Our two nations and Germany have increased cooperation and engaged in joint terrorist training. Soon, under the leadership of our Federal Bureau of Investigation, we will open a law enforcement training academy in Europe, where police will learn how to combat more effectively trafficking of nuclear weapons components as well as the drug trade, organized crime, and money laundering.

The United States will also advance a wide-ranging nonproliferation agenda, a global convention to halt production of fissile materials, efforts to curb North Korea's nuclear ambitions, transparent procedures for dismantling nuclear warheads, and our work to ban testing and extend the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

And today I am proposing a first step toward the eventual elimination of a less visible but still deadly threat: the world's 85 million antipersonnel land mines, one for every 50 people on the face of the Earth. I ask all nations to join with us and conclude an agreement to reduce the number and availability of those mines. Ridding the world of those often hidden weapons will help to save the lives of tens of thousands of men and women and innocent children in the years to come.

Our progress in the last year also provides confidence that in the post-cold-war years we can adapt and construct global institutions that will help to provide security and increase economic growth throughout the world. Since I spoke here last year, 22 nations have joined NATO's Partnership For Peace. The first joint exercises have been conducted, helping to give Europe the chance to become a more unified continent in which democratic nations live within secure borders. In Asia, security talks and economic cooperation will lead to further stability. By reducing nations' fears about their borders and allowing them to spend less on military defenses, our coalition for democracy can give nations in transition a better chance to offer new freedoms and opportunities to their own people.

It is time that we think anew about the structures of this global economy as well, tearing down walls that separate nations instead of hiding behind them. At the Group of Seven meetings in Naples this year we committed ourselves to this task of renewal, to reexamining the economic institutions that have served us so well in the past. In the interest of shared prosperity, the United States actively promotes open markets. Though still in its infancy, the North American Free Trade Agreement has dramatically increased trade between the United States and Mexico, and has produced in the United States alone an estimated 200,000 new jobs. It offers a model to nations throughout the Americas which we hope to build on.

And this week, I will send legislation to the Congress to implement the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the largest trade agreement in all of history. GATT and its successor, the World Trade Organization, hold the promise for all of us of increased exports, higher wages, and improved living standards. And in the months and years to come, we will work no less to extend the reach of open markets, starting with the Asian-Pacific cooperation forum and the Summit of the Americas later this year.

Here, at the United Nations, we must develop a concrete plan to meet the challenges of the next 50 years, even as we celebrate the last 50 years. I believe we should declare next year's 50th anniversary not just a year of celebration but a year of renewal. We call on the Secretary-General to name a working group so that, by the time we meet next year, we will have a concrete action plan to revitalize the U.N.'s obligations to address the security, economic, and political challenges ahead, obligations we must all be willing to assume.

Our objectives should include ready, efficient, and capable U.N. peacekeeping forces. And I

am happy to report that as I pledged to you last year, and thanks to the support in the United States Congress, $1.2 billion is now available from the United States for this critical account.

We must also pledge to keep U.N. reform moving forward, so that we do more with less. And we must improve our ability to respond to urgent needs. Let me suggest that it is time for the members of this Assembly to consider seriously President Menem's suggestion for the creation of a civilian rapid response capability for humanitarian crises. And let us not lose sight of the special role that development and democracy can play in preventing conflicts once peace has been established.

Never before has the United Nations been in a better position to achieve the democratic goals of our Founders. The end of the cold war has freed us from decades of paralyzing divisions, and we all know that multilateral cooperation is not only necessary to address the new threats we face but possible to succeed.

The efforts we have taken together in Haiti are a prime example. Under the sponsorship of the United Nations, American troops, now being joined by the personnel of an ever growing international coalition of over two dozen nations, are giving the people of Haiti their chance at freedom. Creative diplomacy, the influence of economic power, the credible threat of military force, all have contributed to this moment of opportunity.

Essential civil order will be restored. Human rights violations will be curbed. The first refugees are returning within hours on this day. The military leaders will step down; the democratic government will be restored. President Aristide will return. The multinational mission will turn its responsibilities over to the United Nations mission, which will remain in Haiti throughout 1995 until a new President is elected. During this time, a multinational development effort will make available more than $1 billion to begin helping the Haitians rebuild their country.

In the spirit of reconciliation and reconstruction, President Aristide called yesterday for the immediate easing of sanctions so that the work of rebuilding can begin immediately. Accordingly, I intend to act expeditiously within the Security Council Resolutions 917 and 940, to enable us to restore health care, water, and electrical services, construction materials for humanitarian efforts, and communications, agricultural, and educational materials.

Today I am also announcing that the United States will suspend all unilateral sanctions against Haiti except those that affect the military leaders and their immediate supporters. This will include regularly scheduled air flights when the air support becomes available, financial transactions, and travel restrictions. I urge all other nations to do the same.

In Haiti, the United States has demonstrated that it would lead a multinational force when our interests are plain, when the cause is right, when the mission is achievable, and the nations of the world stand with us. But Haiti's people will have to muster the strength and the patience to travel the road of freedom. They have to do this for themselves. Every new democratic nation is fragile, but we will see the day when the people of Haiti fulfill their aspirations for liberty and when they are once again making genuine economic progress.

United Nations actions in Bosnia, as those in Haiti, demonstrate that progress can be made when a coalition backs up diplomacy with military power. For the first time ever, NATO has taken, since we met last year, military actions beyond the territory of its members. The threat of NATO air power helped to establish the exclusion zone around Sarajevo and to end the Bosnian Serbs' spring offensive against Gorazde. And NATO's February ultimatum boosted our mediation efforts which helped to end the war between the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Croats and forged a federation between those two communities.

The situation in Bosnia, to that extent, has improved. But in recent weeks, the situation around Sarajevo has deteriorated substantially, and Sarajevo once again faces the prospect of strangulation. A new resolve by the United Nations to enforce its resolutions is now necessary to save Sarajevo. And NATO stands ready to act.

The situation in Bosnia is yet another reminder of the greatest irony of this century we are leaving: This century so full of hope and opportunity and achievement has also been an age of deep destruction and despair. We cannot help but remember the millions who gave their lives during two World Wars and the half-century in struggle by men and women in the East and West who ultimately prevailed in the name of freedom. But we must also think of our chil-

dren and the world we will leave them in the 21st century.

History has given us a very rare opportunity, the chance to build on the greatest legacy of this century without reliving its darkest moments. And we have shown that we can carry forward humanity's ancient quest for freedom, to build a world where democracy knows no borders but where nations know their borders will always be secure, a world that gives all people the chance to realize their potential and to live out their dreams.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. at the United Nations Building. In his remarks, he referred to United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali; United Nations General Assembly President Amara Essy; and President Carlos Menem of Argentina.

Remarks at a Luncheon for Heads of State in New York City
September 26, 1994

Mr. Secretary-General, distinguished heads of state and government, your Excellencies, guests: First, I think I can speak for all of us in thanking the Secretary-General for his remarks, for his hospitality, and most important of all, for his very strong leadership of the United Nations.

Mr. Secretary-General, you have taken the ideas of peace, help, and security that are at the heart of the U.N.'s mission and worked hard to make them a reality. As the cold war has ended, the world has looked to the U.N. for even more assistance and leadership. You have met this challenge by effectively placing the U.N. at the forefront of international affairs. Your leadership has been particularly apparent in the improvements of the U.N.'s peacekeeping operations. There are now approximately 70,000 peacekeepers deployed around the world, some 5 times the number when you took office. Collaboration among nations is improving, and the operations are growing more efficient.

Your initiatives at the Cairo conference, your efforts to improve coordination of development assistance, the establishment of an independent inspector general and meaningful cost controls and your work to improve the U.N.'s field operations, all these are testaments to your outstanding leadership.

Above all, you have focused on the use of diplomacy to prevent bloodshed and conflict and on building the kinds of permanent institutions that lead to long-term stability within and, as you have so eloquently stated, among nations. For these things and more, all of us applaud you.

Today, opportunities abound to build a world in which democracy reigns, respect for human rights is the rule, political stability expands, economic prosperity is shared by all. These things will not occur, however, unless we commit ourselves to a cooperative spirit unmatched in all human history. That is our challenge. As leaders of member states, we must take responsibility for making the U.N. more responsive and more effective than it has ever been. Only in this way can the U.N. remain a positive force for change and a symbol of justice and hope for the world.

Mr. Secretary-General, you have kept our focus on building the kind of organization that can effectively turn our ideals into reality. We thank you for your vision.

As the United Nations approaches its 50th birthday, let us all pledge to continue to work together for the promise of a better tomorrow. And let us raise our glasses in toast to the Secretary-General and to that promise.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. at the United Nations Building.